THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House is adjourned for half an hour for lunch.

The House then adjourned for lunch at two minutes past two of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at thirty-six minutes past two of the clock, [**The Vice-Chairman, (Shri Sanatan Bisi)** *in the* Chair.]

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN: (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Before we take up the Short Duration Discussion, the Minister will lay on the Table of the House three statements.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Second Ministerial Conference of WTO

THE MINSITER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy of my statement made at the WTO Confernece, a copy of the Ministrial Declaration issued after the Conference and also a copy of the proceedings of the discussion on Electronic Commerce. [Placed in Library. *See* No. LT.-1388/98]

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

Functioning of WTO and participation of India in Participation of India in International Trade Negotiations

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE(West Bengal): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, with your permission, I want to raise a discussison on the functioning of the World Trade Organisation and the participation of India in the International trade Negotiations. While discussing the issue on the floor of the House, the hon. Minister kindly agreed that if a discussion is being raised, then many important issues which are related to the World Trade Organisation and its implication on our economy, in particular, and also on the economy of the developing countries, in general, could be discussed.

Sir, it is known to you that the World Trade Organisation was established after protracted negotiations amongst the nations, which is known as the Uruguy Round of Talks. At the official level it was finalised in December, 1993, and on 15th April, 1994, at Marrakesh, with the seal of approval by the Ministerial Conference, the Organisation actually came to exist from 1st of January, 1995. Two Ministerial meetings have taken place, after the establishment of this Organisation, to review the functioning of the Organisation and the issue relating to it. One such meeting took place at Singapore on 5th and 6th of December, 1996 and another meeting took place recently at Geneva in May, 1998. I would like to confine my observations to three aspects with which we are vitally concerned and which we raised. The detailed information has kiadly today. It was decided in the Ministerial meeting that no longer the international labour issues, the core labour standards, will be brought within the purview of the WTO. This is the assurance which was given by the concluding remarks of the Chairman of the conference at Singapore and it has also been reiterated by the Minister in his statement which has been laid on the Table of the House. That is, to a considerable extent, reassuring. But on the other issue we shall have to remain careful. I also draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the Multilateral agreement on Investment (MAI), to which he has referred in his statement. There is a short history of MAI. Sometime in early 1995 the OECD countries, mainly European Union, United States of America, Canada and Japan— the OECD countries, not all-initiated that there should be a Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Initially the idea was that only the OECD countries would be concerned with it. But later they recommended that it should be taken up by the WTO and, rightly, at the Minsiterial confernece in Singapore it was opposed to. The decision which was taken was that within the purview of the framework of the WTO agreements it would be studied. We understand from the Minsiter's statement that presently it is being studied by the Working Group and the Working group has not yet completed its exercise. I think, once the Working Group completes its exercise this issue need not come before the WTO automatically. But from our experience we have seen, and the hon. Minister is surely